

Case 3026***Androctonus caucasicus* Nordmann, 1840 (currently *Mesobuthus caucasicus*; Arachnida, Scorpiones): proposed conservation of the specific name**

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve the specific name of *Mesobuthus caucasicus* (Nordmann, 1840) for a scorpion (family BUTHIDAE) with a wide range in the Middle East, Afghanistan, China and central Asia. The name is threatened by the senior synonym *Scorpio caucasicus* Fischer von Waldheim, 1813 which has not been used for over 80 years.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Arachnida; Scorpiones; BUTHIDAE; *Mesobuthus caucasicus*.

1. Fischer von Waldheim (1813, p. 401, pl. 4, fig. 1) figured and named *Scorpio caucasicus*, which is an available name under Article 12b(7) of the Code. The holotype of this species is lost. Birula (1900, p. 366) suggested that *S. caucasicus* is a senior synonym of *Androctonus caucasicus* Nordmann, 1840, the name for a taxon described from Tiflis (now Tbilisi), Georgia (currently known as *Mesobuthus caucasicus*; family BUTHIDAE). The names *caucasicus* and *caucasicus* are not homonyms because their spellings differ by one letter (Article 57f of the Code), and they are not treated as such under Article 58; they were, however, often confused by subsequent authors.

2. Fischer's specific name *caucasicus* was used as valid from 1900 to 1912. It was used as *Buthus caucasicus* for the species currently called *Mesobuthus caucasicus* (Nordmann, 1840) by Birula in a number of publications, as noted by Vachon (1958, p. 148), and by Leister (1910), and for *Mesobuthus eupeus* (C.L. Koch, 1837) by Pocock (1900). Birula (1917a, p. 1) stated that Fischer's name related to either one of the two Caucasian species, *M. caucasicus* and *M. eupeus*, and on this basis he rejected *S. caucasicus* as a 'nomen nudum' (nomen dubium would have been more accurate). It has not been used since but it is an available name and as such is a putative threat.

3. I (Fet, 1989, p. 102) mentioned an unidentified scorpion collected by Baron de Vietinghoff (1812, p. 96) in Pyatigorsk (northern Caucasus). There is strong circumstantial evidence that this specimen could have been the holotype of *Scorpio caucasicus*:

(a) Vietinghoff (1812) recorded that the specimen was sent to Fischer in Moscow; Fischer's work was published the following year and contained no Caucasian scorpions other than *S. caucasicus*. Actually, no other scorpion species from the Caucasus was described for many years until the works of C.L. Koch (1839) and Nordmann (1840).

(b) Vietinghoff (1812) recorded the number of plates on the paired abdominal pectinal organs of the specimen as 30–35, a characteristic of the male of *Mesobuthus caucasicus* (Nordmann) and one which readily distinguishes it from the other, related Caucasian species, *M. eupeus* (C.L. Koch), in which males have 23–26 plates (Fet, unpublished data).

(c) Although Pyatigorsk is far removed from the continuous range of both species, it is known that *Mesobuthus caucasicus* (but not *M. eupeus*) forms disjunct local populations (see Fet, 1989) and is found in human dwellings (see Birula, 1917b), and as a result is carried by man.

4. Thus, the possibility exists that *Scorpio caucasicus* Fischer, 1813 is a senior synonym of *Mesobuthus caucasicus* (Nordmann, 1840, p. 731, pl. 1, fig. 1), and its recognition threatens the stability of use of the latter name. No material of *caucasicus* exists in Moscow now; I searched for it in the Moscow University Zoological Museum, where Fischer's materials supposedly went. It was already missing in Birula's time.

5. Fischer's name has not been used as valid for more than 80 years, while both *Mesobuthus caucasicus* (Nordmann, 1840) and *M. eupeus* (C.L. Koch, 1839) have become well established and have been used dozens of times (in combination with either *Buthus* or *Mesobuthus*) by numerous authors in taxonomic and biological literature (see, for example, Werner, 1934; Vachon, 1958, 1966; Kinzelbach, 1984, 1985; Vachon & Kinzelbach, 1987; Farzanpay, 1988; Fet, 1989, 1994). *M. caucasicus* has a wide range in the Middle East, Afghanistan, China and much of central Asia, and six subspecies are currently recognised.

6. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name of *caucasicus* Fischer von Waldheim, 1813, as published in the binomen *Scorpio caucasicus*;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *caucasicus* Nordmann, 1840, as published in the binomen *Androctonus caucasicus*;
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *caucasicus* Fischer von Waldheim, 1813, as published in the binomen *Scorpio caucasicus* and as suppressed in (1) above.

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